

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Concerns about stability of the Shorthorn gym's west wall seemed to be alleviated at last Tuesday's school board meeting after a presentation from a local contractor.

Board member Gregg Smith brought up concerns about the possible instability of that wall at the November meeting, when board members decided to have a professional look at it more closely.

Local contractor Nick Schultz examined the wall and the building plans and said he did not find anything to suggest the wall has moved, as had been rumored.

Steel-constructed walls can move slightly, he said, "but with the way it's built, I doubt it's moved at all."

He noted if there had been any major flex in the wall to cause concern, cracks would be seen in the sheet rock tape joints and on the building's exterior, "and there are none," he said.

At Schultz's suggestion, the school maintenance staff plans to put a filler near the surface of the control joints so it can be observed for any tell-tale signs of adverse or abnormal movement. If that would happen, Schultz indicated certain portions of the wall could be opened up and the interior structural components could be examined more closely for problems.

Schultz said some terminology when referring to the wall might be in order, as well.

He said the west side of the gym was not built with a "temporary wall," as has often been referenced, but rather with a "removable wall" designed to cause less structural damage if it ever is taken out for an addition.

"It will stand for 100 years" as it is, he said.

Other school board business

- More details on a severance agreement with instrumental music teacher Richard Munson were released this week by Supt. Matt Fisher. At the Jan. 12 meeting, board members approved Munson's resignation from his grade 5-12 instrumental music position effective Jan. 15, after being on paid leave-of-absence through Jan. 14. The agreement between Munson and the school district made available this week includes a \$5,000 severance payment, the equivalent of the sick leave and personal leave left on his contract, and the payment of his monthly health and dental premiums through August, 2010. Munson's music classes are now being covered by fulltime CCS teachers Randy Hayes and Agnes Strand, as well as student teacher, Amanda Morris. Supt. Fisher gave no details on what led to Munson's resignation since it is a personnel matter. His last day on the job was Dec. 14, 2009.

- 2010 is an election year, and Supt. Matt Fisher reminded board members of the incumbent filing deadline on Feb. 15. Board members who will be up for re-election this year include Sheila Stromberger, Bob Milner, Penny Strand and Todd Burpo. All terms will be four years.

- A transmission flushing machine will be purchased by the school for bus maintenance. Supt. Fisher said he discussed the machine with David Bopp, head of bus maintenance, who

suggested that better care for the bus transmissions would be realized by using this machine. He does regularly changed the transmission fluid, but a full flushing will add to the life of the busses, Supt. Fisher indicated. The board gave the go-ahead for the estimated \$4,000 purchase.

- Advertisements for a new full-size route bus have started, with bids to be reviewed at the February meeting based on the board's vote last week. Specs will also include a lift so the bus would be available for special needs students. Federal funds the school received from the stimulus package will likely be used for the purchase, Supt. Fisher said. That would help reserve CCS transportation budget funds for a new activity bus the board is considering in the next year or two.

- A question on the K-6 Reading Mastery Program was posed by board member Gregg Smith concerning communication with parents. K-6 Principal Nathan Vitosh said letters were sent in the fall to parents telling them which reading level their children were in. Unless the students switched a full grade level in the program, parents probably wouldn't be contacted, he said. Smith suggested more communication with parents.

- Special education teacher Carol Hess gave a report on her grade 9-12 program and how she is helping students prepare for life after high school. She is working with eight students this year, the lowest number she's had. The most during her tenure has been around 30 students, she said.

- Board members moved their February meeting a day earlier to Monday, Feb. 8, because Supt. Fisher will be out of town Feb. 9, the regular meeting date. A board retreat was also set for Wednesday, Feb. 24, starting at 4 p.m. in the board room.

- A contract with ESU #16 for distance learning services was approved. The cost for the same services will rise \$600 from this year's contract at \$20,400 to the 2010-11 school year cost at \$21,000. While there are no high school classes this year using distance learning, Supt. Fisher said there are six to seven college classes using the school's distance learning service. Business teacher Sandy O'Neil has also been approached to teach a business class via distance learning next year, Fisher said.

- School board members, administration and guests attended a dinner prepared by the high school's ProStart class and instructor Cathy Hanna. The guests enjoyed a meal featuring prime rib, chicken cordon bleu and a pasta dish, and all the trimmings. The class normally serves the dinner at the December board meeting, but snow cancelled classes that day so it was moved to January.